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## "LA MARSEILLAISE"

THE celebration on the 24th ultimo, at the little village of Choisy-le-Roy, six miles from Paris, of the centenary of the "Marseillaise," was an event; and although I fancy that the *fête* was planned by the inhabitants of the town with as great an eye to pecuniary profit as to patriotism, the affair was none the less interesting.

It was here at Choisy-le-Roy that Rouget de Lisle, composer of both the words and music of the hymn, breathed his last. Some time since a monument was completed and erected in the borough, commemorating the origin of the famous war song. It is a bronze group representing the poet-musician singing the hymn in the presence of his spellbound hearers.

The history of the "Marseillaise" and the exact date of its composition are not altogether clear. Even the author himself could not, in later years, recall the circumstances under which it was written; and although the legend of its being first sung before the chief official of Strasbourg is familiar to everyone, it is probable that tradition alone has served to create it.

The commonly accepted version is as follows: Rouget, a young officer of engineers in garrison at Strasbourg in the winter of 1791, or the beginning of 1792, was frequently the guest of the mayor of the beautiful city, once French, now German.

One evening the young lieutenant's host, observing the general melancholy with which the political disturbances of the times had afflicted his guests, proposed some music. Promptly responding to the request, the young engineer sat down before the harpsichord and, accompanying himself, sang a song, the words, combined with the music of which, excited almost to frenzy the admiration and enthusiasm of his hearers.

It was the "Marseillaise," the famous "Chant de Guerre de l'Armée du Rhin," intended as a lyric menace to the foreign foes of the First Republic, and afterwards adopted by the Revolutionists of Marseilles.

True it is that many musicians, as well as antiquarians, have disputed the authorship of the stirring song, claiming it to be an old ecclesiastical chant of the eighteenth century. Others ascribe the music to one Lulli, a Florentine who came to Paris in the service of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, niece of Louis XIV, and who, if I mistake not, afterward became director of the Grand Opera.

In fact, at one period it seemed that the authorship of the revolutionary ballad would be more difficult to determine than that of the "Letters of Junius," while his personality appeared even more indefinite than the mysterious Man in the Iron Mask.

For my part I prefer to give Rouget credit for both words and music, or at least to ascribe to him their authorship until proof is established to the contrary.

The song itself has passed through almost as many vicissitudes as the French nation itself, and indicates in a certain degree the history of the present century.

Prohibited during the four years of the Consulate, the ten years of the First Empire, the fifteen years of the Restoration, the eighteen years of the Monarchy of July, and the eighteen years of the Second Empire, it may at present be played or sung wherever the brilliant tricolor of France flutters its gorgeous folds.

Thus it is that one of the most magnificent melodies of the world has been proscribed for sixty-five out of ninety-two years, simply for the reason that its stirring strains awakened dangerous memories of a too radical Republican era.

I distinctly remember, when a little fellow, its martial measures being played by four great military bands massed in the Garden of the Tuileries on the eve of the Franco-Prussian war. I remember too, during the awful days of the Commune that disgraced the downfall of a conquered nation, seeing more than one red-eyed vagabond marched off to jail for having dared to sing the hymn in public.

Whoever be the author of the immortal war song, peace to his ashes! and may the soul-inspired notes that he breathed into the magnificent chords of his enchanting melody vibrate as long as freedom, liberty and independence shall reign.

JOHN PRESTON BEECHER.

PARIS, April 1, 1892.

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William Astor Chanler, who is to accompany a German officer on an important exploring expedition in East Africa, brought back from his last African trip probably the finest collection of trophies of the chase ever imported into the United States. Many of the specimens were made up into articles of use or ornament. An elephant's foot was silver-mounted and converted into a champagne cooler; the hide of a rhinoceros formed the top of a table, and there were many objects of ivory. The importation paid $25,000 duty.

## PRIZES IN OLD PLATE

SO much has been printed, even in this country, where the demand for genuine antique silver plate grows constantly more extended and imperative, about the recent great plate sale at the Dowell Galleries, in Edinburgh, that it should interest readers of THE COLLECTOR to learn that a small but extremely artistic, choice and valuable collection of pieces from this sale was acquired by Tiffany & Co., and may now be seen in their house on Union Square. The objects have evidently been chosen with an eye to their beauty of design and their purity or representative quality of style, and the collection is, in its way, one of model pieces. To add to its value, the origin of the pieces is unimpeachable, which is more than can be said for most of the old plate, so-called, that swells the silver chests and shimmers on the sideboard of the aristocratic America of to-day.

The value of antique plate is threefold. In the first place, it has a historical interest, which it cannot possess unless it be authentic; in the second, it has the quaint charm of the art of the period to which it belongs; and thirdly, the pieces are unique—that is to say, they were not created to supply an indiscriminate demand, but each piece, or set of pieces, was specially originated and executed by skilled artificers in the precious metals for the purpose for which it was designed. When these three elements are present in a collection of old plate, it is a collection indeed.

The collection at Tiffany & Co.'s includes two beautiful circular dessert dishes, twelve inches in diameter, chased and embossed, weighing over 56 ounces and bearing the Paris hallmark of about 1809, another pair of over 54 ounces, and another of over 59 ounces. These are in silver gilt, and come from the collection of the late Lord Justice-General for Scotland, John Inglis. A choice example of English silver work of the eighteenth century is a finely engraved oval teapot and flat, of 1794, weighing 19 ounces, 10 dwt., and another is an oval cake basket, beautifully engraved and with pierced ornamentation, whose weight approaches 27 ounces. These two pieces are in silver. Other notable pieces in silver are, a pierced and engraved oval cake basket, with a reeded handle, of the year 1793, weighing over 18 ounces, and four upright candlesticks for the table, square at the base, with pillar stems and fluted circular nozzles, of 1773, which weigh about 45 ounces.

The specimens of plate from the collection of the Earl of Dunmore are simply masterpieces. They include a massive cream ewer, enriched with floral embossings and with masked feet and a gilt interior, weighing 13 ounces, 5 dwt.; a wonderfully beautiful hot-water kettle with a unique wave-line decoration and reeded handle, and its stand and spirit lamp, made in 1800, and weighing 66 ounces.; a large circular salver, with an engraved border and a shaped rim, over a foot in diameter, made in 1754, and weighing 36 ounces 10 dwt.; four magnificent candelabra with two branches, square gadroon bases, waved spiral stems with Corinthian capitals topped with flame crowns, made in 1759 and weighing 290 ounces, and as a fitting crown to the collection, a superb pair of taller candelabra of corresponding design, with a centre sconce and four radiating side-branches for lights, which weigh 281 ounces.

Persons to whom the love for antique plate may seem a sort of exotic taste will be inclined to correct this opinion in the presence of such specimens of it as these. They represent the refinement of the art of living in a combination of utility and beauty, and justify the reply of the old Duke of Brunswick when someone asked him whether he dined better off his matchless plate than he would off porcelain dishes. "It pleases my eye," said he; "my eye pleases my brain; I think pleasantly and forget that I have a stomach, even if the cook does but half his duty."

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At the University Library in Philadelphia is now on exhibition the missionary museum of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, brought together during the past sixty years by missionaries in India, China and Africa, and is now for the first time subjected to careful study and scientific classification. The greater part of the collection, having been made years ago, comprises many curious objects not now obtainable and of great interest from their history and association. The collection comprises, besides images and manuscripts, vases and incense burners, temple furniture and household shrines, amulets and talismans and objects illustrating popular superstitions. Fortune-telling with cards has its history told in a series of objects showing the development of the playing card, many sets of cards made especially for fortune-telling completing the series. Planchette, palmistry, physiognomy and other methods of divination are also illustrated. This exhibition, the first of the kind in this country, and, with the exception of the Guimet Museum in Paris, the first in the world, was planned and carried out by the University Achæological Society, by which the department of archæology and paleontology of the University is supported. It has been aided from the inception by the untiring efforts of the provost of the University, Dr. William Pepper.